



॥ विवेकचूडामणि ॥

... Vivekacūḍāmaṇi ...

AI Summary – Class 127

For Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
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Question before class

Dipti's Question: What Does "Not Real" Mean?

Dipti raised an important philosophical question: When we say Māyā is "not real" and only Ātmā is real, what exactly does "not real" mean? She noted that while it makes sense not to rely on the changing world for happiness, it's difficult to think of the world as "not real" since it appears so tangible and present. Acharya Tadany indicated this topic would be addressed in the day's teaching.

Summary

Concluding the Discussion of Anātmā (Śloka 122-123)

Acharya Tadany explained that Śaṅkarācārya was completing his elaborate discussion of anātmā (non-self), which included:

- Sthūla śarīra (gross body)
- Sūkṣma śarīra (subtle body)
- Māyā (the apparent reality)

In concluding this section, Śaṅkarācārya makes a crucial statement: *idaṁ anātmā tattvaṁ asat* – "This entire anātmā is asat." This is a unique and fundamental teaching of Vedānta.

Understanding "Asat" – Not Independently Existent

Acharya Tadany emphasized that *asat* does **not** mean "non-existent" or "illusory" in the sense of being completely unreal. Rather, *asat* means *mithyā* – that which does not exist independently. In positive terms, it means "dependently existing."

This concept was illustrated through the verse's analogy: *maru marīcikā apam* – like water in a mirage. A mirage is experienced and perceived, but upon closer inquiry (walking toward it), it



disappears. Similarly, the universe is experienced, but upon deep inquiry into its nature, it resolves into consciousness alone.

Three Systems of Philosophy

Acharya Tadany outlined three broad categories of philosophical systems to show Vedānta's unique position:

System 1: Matter-Dominant Philosophy

In these systems, matter is the primary principle and consciousness is secondary or derivative. Consciousness is considered a temporary product of matter. (Examples include materialist and physicalist philosophies.)

System 2: Equal Status Philosophy (Sāṅkhya)

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, both consciousness (Puruṣa) and matter (Prakṛti) have independent, eternal existence. Neither is born from the other; both enjoy equal ontological status.

System 3: Consciousness-Dominant Philosophy (Vedānta)

Vedānta teaches that consciousness alone is the fundamental reality. Matter does not have independent existence (substantiality) but derives its apparent existence from consciousness. The relationship is like:

- Gold (consciousness) and ornaments (matter) – ornaments have no independent existence apart from gold
- Clay (consciousness) and pots (matter) – pots are non-substantial products of clay

This teaching is **unique to Vedānta** and can be difficult to accept initially because matter appears so tangible while consciousness seems invisible.

Scientific Analysis Supporting Vedānta

Acharya Tadany showed how modern science actually supports the Vedānta view through progressive analysis:

1. The world appears as various objects
2. Upon analysis: all objects are combinations of elements (periodic table: 122+ elements)
3. Upon further analysis: elements break down into molecules
4. Molecules break down into atoms
5. Atoms break down into subatomic particles (protons, neutrons, electrons) in motion
6. Even these resolve into energy
7. Modern quantum physics shows: even energy depends on the observer



This is like peeling an onion (prapañca mithyā) – layer after layer, with no substantial core. Śaṅkarācārya uses the example of a banana stem, which consists only of layers wrapped around emptiness, devoid of any solid essence.

The more we inquire, the more everything disappears, until only the observer (consciousness) remains. Everything else has only apparent, dependent existence.

Introduction to Paramātmā (Śloka 124)

Having completed the first question (Ko'sāv anātmā – What is anātmā?), Śaṅkarācārya now introduces the second main topic: *Paramātmā* (Supreme Self).

The verse states: *Ataḥ te sampravakṣyāmi svarūpaṁ paramātmānaḥ* – "Now, from here onwards,

I shall explain to you the nature (svarūpa) of Paramātmā."

This is the **central topic** of all Upaniṣads and Vedānta. The other six questions are auxiliary topics supporting this main teaching.

The Benefit: Freedom from Bondage (Mokṣa)

The verse promises: *Yaj jñātvā naraḥ muktaḥ bandhanāt* – "By knowing this, a person becomes free from all bondage."

Acharya Tadany explained there are **two types of bondage**:

Psychological/Emotional Bondage

These are mental afflictions that bind us even when we want to be free:

- Rāga (attachment)
- Dveṣa (aversion)
- Kāma (desire/lust)
- Krodha (anger)
- Lobha (greed)
- Moha (delusion)
- Mātsarya (jealousy)
- Bhaya (fear)
- Śoka (sadness)
- Dissatisfaction and self-judgment

We are figuratively imprisoned by these mental states, unable to free ourselves even when we desire to do so.



Philosophical Bondage (Deha-abhimāna)

This is identification with the body-mind-sense complex. We look upon ourselves as small individuals confined to a physical body of particular size and shape (1.5m, 1.8m, 2m, etc.). We feel imprisoned within this limited physical form.

The Aitareya Upaniṣad uses the analogy of a bird in a cage: the ignorant jīvātmā is like a caged bird, while the wise person has broken free from the cage through knowledge.

This "breaking free" doesn't mean physically leaving the body, but rather transcending the limitation through knowledge of one's true nature as all-pervading consciousness. The wise person realizes: "I am not confined to this small body; I am the infinite, all-pervading consciousness principle."

Kaivalya – Non-Duality

The verse concludes: *kaivalyam aśnute* – "One attains Kaivalya."

Kaivalya means mokṣa (liberation), but literally means "non-duality" or "being the only one." It derives from *kevala* (alone, only one). This means realizing: "I am the only existent reality in the universe. There is no independently existing 'second thing.'"

This experience is similar to a dream, where everything appears as separate objects, but upon awakening, we realize the entire dream world was born from us, existed in us, and resolved back into us. The apparent duality had no independent existence.

Similarly, the waking world's apparent duality is not independent. The wise person realizes: *tat ekaḥ avaśiṣṭaḥ śivaḥ kevalo'ham* – "That one alone remains – I am Śiva, the non-dual consciousness."

Reference to Śaṅkarācārya's Other Works

Acharya Tadany referenced Śaṅkarācārya's *Nirvāṇa Ṣaṭkam* (Six Verses on Liberation) and *Daśa Śloki* (Ten Verses), which systematically negate all limited identifications:

- Social roles and structures
- Varṇa (social class) and āśrama (life stages)
- Religious practices and meditation states (dhāraṇā, dhyāna, yoga)
- Body-mind-sense complex

In the climactic seventh verse of Daśa Śloki, Śaṅkarācārya even negates the spiritual journey itself: *Na śāstram, na śāstram, na śiṣyaḥ, na śikṣā, na ca tvam, na ca aham* – "There is no scripture, no teacher, no disciple, no teaching, not you, not I."



This doesn't mean these disappear physically, but that once the absolute truth is realized, all these relative, dependent roles dissolve. What remains is: *eko'vaśiṣṭaḥ śivaḥ kevalo'ham* – "The absolute 'I' alone remains – not the relative first-person 'I' related to second and third persons, but the unrelated, pure awareness 'I.'"

Key Sanskrit Terms Explained

- **Anātmā** – the non-self; everything that is not the true Self
- **Ātmā** – the Self; pure consciousness from the individual perspective
- **Brahman** – the absolute reality; pure consciousness from the universal perspective
- **Paramātmā** – the Supreme Self
- **Māyā** – the apparent reality that has dependent existence
- **Mithyā** – dependent existence; not independently real
- **Asat** – not independently existent; dependent
- **Mokṣa** – liberation from all bondage
- **Kaivalya** – non-duality; being the only one
- **Sthūla śarīra** – the gross physical body
- **Sūkṣma śarīra** – the subtle body (mind, intellect, ego)
- **Deha-abhimāna** – identification with the body
- **Jīvātmā** – the individual soul/consciousness
- **Śarīra-trayam** – the three bodies (gross, subtle, causal)
- **Prapañca** – the projected universe; the world



Question after class

Is there any difference between "consciousness" and "consciousness principle"?

Acharya Tadany's Answer: Generally, they are synonyms. "Consciousness principle" simply emphasizes that the principle is present. The difference may appear in certain contexts where we distinguish between:

- A conscious living being (you as a person)
- The consciousness principle that enlivens that being

However, as the teaching progresses, these English terms will be replaced by the precise Sanskrit terms: Ātmā and Brahman.

Q: Is there a difference between Ātmā and Brahman?

Acharya Tadany's Answer: Both refer to the same consciousness principle seen from different perspectives:

- **Ātmā** – consciousness principle seen from the micro angle (jīva perspective, from the viewpoint of the individual body-mind)
- **Brahman** – consciousness principle seen from the macro angle (prapañca perspective, from the viewpoint of the entire universe)

One is consciousness enclosed in an individual body (jīvātmā in śarīra-trayam), the other is consciousness manifesting as the entire universe (Brahman in prapañca-trayam).